

# Expeditionary Aerospace Force

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## Introduction

Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) is basically the Air Force's guiding vision for how we're organized, trained, and equipped to deploy and sustain our aerospace forces for military operations overseas. The EAF is the United States Air Force. We recognize that aerospace power is increasingly used by our nation to influence world events, and in order to do so we have the expeditionary mindset that we may be sent abroad as a routine way of business. This isn't new to the relatively junior members of our force who came in within the last ten years. However, today we are a much smaller force than we were a decade ago at the end of the Cold War, yet we're four times as busy. EAF seeks to balance the workload by widening the resource pool of people and units that can deploy. It's not just the deploying piece, but addresses forces that fight in place, forces that commute to the expeditionary operation, forces that telecommute to expeditionary operations, forces that provide transportation to those operations, forces that sustain the expeditionary operations, and forces which train, organize, equip and manage the expeditionary forces. EAF is inclusive to the entire Air Force.

## Study Assignment

Read the information section of this lesson.

Lesson Objective: Know the characteristics and structure of the EAF concept and AEF construct.

Samples of Behavior:

1. Define the EAF concept.
2. Define what the EAF concept means to Air Force members.
3. State the AEF construct in terms of force packaging, scheduling, presentation of forces, and how the AEF applies across the spectrum of conflict.

## Information

EAF is truly about embracing and understanding the concepts and implications of engagement and presence articulated in our current vision *Global Engagement: Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The EAF is a proactive move away from the Cold War USAF. It is reaffirmation of the vital role aerospace power plays across the full spectrum of conflict in support of the National Military Strategy. It is recognition of the growing tendency to employ aerospace power frequently and over sustained periods as a part of that strategy, and it is recognition that this demand for aerospace power is driven by it's unique characteristics – range, speed, flexibility, and precision.

## **Force Management**

At its core, EAF is about structural and cultural changes to create more effective force management tools. A key objective is to understand where USAF resources are limited and how over committing them to meet requirements today can result in less capability to meet essential requirements tomorrow.

Today, any time we deploy forces we are using parts of our “two MTW” force and are introducing some risk to planning factors. There are no residual USAF forces. If we don’t fence our train, organize, equip and sustain forces during engagement, we aggravate the impact with reduced readiness.

Kosovo is a case study of the issues the EAF concept was intended to address. Kosovo was the first large contingency for the USAF using the post-Cold War force structure. It is the first large contingency executed from a fully “engaged” posture. Kosovo also is the first USAF reconstitution needed since Korea. Finally, Kosovo showed that even during a large effort, other rotational commitments continue.

The EAF is already paying dividends in reconstitution planning. Using the force management tools, the USAF was able to measure and articulate the impacts Kosovo operations, on top of our other worldwide commitments, had on the force. The Joint Staff and CINCs are currently working alternatives to allow the USAF time to reconstitute its forces.

EAF structural changes enable more responsive force packaging; provide better visibility into force TEMPO and better detection when the force is stressed; and focus relief on stressed areas. As already discussed, these structural changes provide Air Force senior leadership with a force management tool that better assesses readiness, quantifies tempo impacts, and guides investments.

Cultural changes involve how we recruit, train, nurture and retain our Airmen and how we structure, manage and invest in the force. Airmen need the skills to excel in the expeditionary world ... and the stability to pursue a rewarding personal life. It is the major task still facing the EAF.

Many processes we use to grow and manage these expeditionary airmen haven’t evolved to the reality that recurring expeditionary rotation and contingencies are part of normal Air Force operations. Over the past nine years, most airmen have come to understand this reality. But, since the system hasn’t adapted, it doesn’t always provide the skills or resources the airmen need in deployed environments.

Training must adapt to this environment. Training must involve subjects like buddy care and basic survival skills for expeditionary airmen who will live in “field” conditions on a recurring basis. Airmen must understand what makes aerospace forces expeditionary and how to make them more expeditionary. We must know how to measure, limit and sustain long-term engagement (steady-state contingencies); how to quickly transition to surge operations up to and including MTWs; and then smoothly reconstitute back to sustainable engagement.

How we manage the force also hasn't evolved fully to the new reality. We must institutionalize the rule sets and the planning concepts that create more effective force packaging; make TEMPO visibility and relief happen; and target investments to create more sustainable, ready and responsive forces. These concepts embody the "expeditionary warrior mindset".

Operational change encompasses innovative approaches and new technologies that make us light, lean, lethal and rapidly deployable/employable worldwide. More simplistically: light and lean means smaller forward footprint; more lethal means less force required for a desired effect; and rapid response reduces demand for forward presence. They reduce the burden engagement places on the force.

Doctrine, material and logistics are the primary accounting systems, but the key to innovation is fostering concept development and learning. Formal experimentation is needed to test new ideas and doctrines or to try new organizational, logistics and employment concepts. In addition to developing concepts, experimentation supplements education and skills training by allowing airmen to test innovative ideas and helping them learn new ways to accomplish the mission. We must also do a better job of implementing lessons learned from past operations. Finally, acquisition, research and development must leverage technology to enable our evolution toward the EAF vision.

EAF focuses on managing available forces against joint tasks. EAF force management tools help identify force structure shortfalls that may merit investment. The force is essentially MTW sized, resulting in shortfalls in some capabilities, which in turn leads to excessive tempo for some AF people. Finally, EAF does highlight force attributes that reduce the burden of engagement.

But, EAF does not drive specific changes into employment concepts. EAF has not added any new missions, tasks or functions to USAF. And, EAF is not a program.

### **Main EAF points:**

- EAF is about structural and cultural changes to create more effective force management tools
- In a heavily engaged environment, the USAF must have processes to smoothly transition across the spectrum of military operations
- Force management tools define sustainable engagement: the levels of deployment/tempo our forces can sustain
- Force management tools provide "Trigger Points" to determine when commitments are exceeding sustainable levels (surge)
- Efforts to mitigate impact and plan for reconstitution must begin simultaneously with start of surge operations

- Any time we deploy forces we are using parts of our “two MTW” force and are putting the execution of at least parts of one MTW planning at risk
- Light and lean means smaller forward footprint; more lethal means less force required for a desired effect; and rapid response reduces demand for forward presence
- We must manage deployment and other requirements to keep them within sustainable levels

### **Why is it important?**

EAF addresses the high demands the strategy of Global Engagement places on USAF forces. These demands include maintaining high deployment tempos and multiple sustained forward operating locations while retaining rapid crisis response capability...and the ability to conduct two Major Theater Wars. These demands are stressing our people and our assets. The symptoms include lower retention rates, decreasing readiness rates, increasing cannibalization rates and lower mission-ready rates. EAF steps up to a dual challenge: sustaining our aerospace assets and retaining our people while presenting timely, relevant forces to meet the demands of our national strategy.

### **How was it developed?**

This expeditionary approach, while renewed and refocused, is strongly rooted in the history and traditions of airpower. (The 40-year history of expeditionary airpower is covered in *Immediate Reach, Immediate Power: The Expeditionary Force and Aerospace Power Projection in the Post Cold War Era*, by Dr Richard Davis.) It is further embodied in the core competencies of the US Air Force and the USAF’s central mission of providing timely and responsive land and space-based aerospace power. In turn, it helps to implement the key concepts found in Joint Vision 2010. Finally, it reflects the lessons learned from the “Air Expeditionary Forces” we have deployed for carrier gap filler and other short duration missions.

### **The EAF is still evolving!**

It is a journey, not a destination. New EAF concepts are already evolving out of our lessons learned from surging into, sustaining, and planning to reconstitute from Operations ALLIED FORCE and SHINING HOPE.

## **Aerospace Expeditionary Force**

Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) are the most visible of the changes being implemented under the Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) concept.

EAF embodies the Air Force vision to organize, train, equip and sustain its Total Force – Active, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve – to meet the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The EAF addresses these challenges through

enhanced sustainability, readiness and responsiveness. The fundamental objective of the EAF is to enhance the operational capabilities the US Air Force provides today to its clients, the warfighting Commanders in Chief (CINCs), while sustaining a viable force that can also provide those capabilities in the future.

## Force Management

At its core, EAF is about structural and cultural changes to create more effective force management tools. A key objective of the EAF vision and the expeditionary mindset is force management. USAF resources are limited and over committing them to meet requirements today can result in less capability to meet essential requirements tomorrow. Therefore, we needed more responsive force packaging; better visibility into force TEMPO; better detection when the force is stressed; and finally, a mechanism to focus relief on stressed areas.

Aerospace Expeditionary Forces are force management tools. The Air Force will organize the majority of its Total Force into ten AEFs, two dedicated on-call Aerospace Expeditionary Wings (AEWs), and five Mobility Leadership Wings. AEFs are a composite of pre-designated units from which the Joint Force Commander can tailor a force package to meet a specific task. Each AEF will have roughly equivalent capabilities, composed of fighter and bomb squadrons, assigned theater lift and tanker forces, tactical leadership and a full complement of combat support.

- AEFs are not deployable units.
- AEFs do not have commanders or separate command authority.

Aerospace Expeditionary Wings (AEWs), Groups (AEGs), and Squadrons (AESs) are deployable units tailored from the AEFs capabilities. It is probable that AEFs will deploy forces simultaneously to more than one regional CINC at the same time; and these forces will be dispersed to numerous forward operating locations.

Each AEF draws forces from across the Total Force. This includes the Air Reserve Component (ARC) – the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. The objective is to pre-identify as many deployable people and assets as possible in order to distribute deployment loads. Total Force integration of ARC people, equipment and aircraft allow better force and personnel tempo management.

Nearly every active duty wing will have forces aligned to multiple AEFs. Each flying squadron will be aligned with a different AEF. The wing's expeditionary combat support personnel and equipment will be put into modular teams and distributed across even more AEFs. This approach distributes deployments across multiple wings with the objective of reducing disruption of home base operations.

Note that traditional command and organizational structures remain. Squadrons still report to wings that report to Numbered Air Forces (NAFs) that report to major air commands (MAJCOMs). These traditional structures serve several important functions, two of them of interest here.

- One is the service responsibility to train, organize, equip and sustain USAF capabilities. These functions will not change and responsibility still rests with the traditional command structure.
- A second is to respond to a major theater war (MTW). Today, traditional structures are still the way USAF forces are provided to OPLANs and respond to MTWs.

Two AEFs help define the level of deployment commitments the USAF can sustain over time. This sustainable commitment is measured in terms of combat power, independent expeditionary combat support deployments and the number of forward operating locations that can be supported.

AEFs represent a specific level of aerospace capabilities: air superiority; suppression-of-enemy-air-defenses; air-to-ground including bombers and precision munitions; mobility; expeditionary combat support such as civil engineers and security police; and tactical level leadership.

AEFs include a cross section of Air Force weapon systems (150+ total aircraft of dissimilar types) and people (10,000-15,000) providing forces for theater commanders.

Each AEF also has a designated lead wing and each pair of AEFs has a designated mobility lead wing. Lead wing commanders and staffs do not command the AEFs. They add group or wing-level leadership to the set of capabilities in the AEF. These commanders and staff will deploy to expeditionary locations where there is no pre-existing command structure – and would fall under command of the gaining CINC or designated joint force commander. The mobility leadership would be tapped should the expeditionary locations require leadership with mobility expertise. Examples include setting up a base to receive lift support for a humanitarian relief operation or a non-combatant evacuation operation.

The AEFs provide Air Force senior leadership with a Force Management Tool that better assesses tempo and readiness, quantifies tempo impacts, and guides investments.

AEFs, combined with new force management policies, will allow the Air Force to better schedule units for deployments, making the process much more predictable to Air Force personnel. The objective is to keep individual personnel tempo at or below 120 days of TDY per year. To accomplish this, an individual can only be aligned to one AEF; and each AEF will only be eligible for deployment 90 days every 15 months. This allows other TDY days for training and exercises.

The AEF cycle defines the policy and procedures by which these forces will rotate through scheduled deployment requirements.

### **Deployment/On-call Eligibility**

Pairs of AEFs will fill 90-day eligibility periods during which their constituent units will deploy forward or remain at home in an On-Call status. After 90 days the

next two AEFs take up the load. During the eligibility period, AEF units will fill all scheduled combat and combat support deployment requirements worldwide. The residual forces from these AEFs will be prepared to respond to pop-up crises.

Because of force structure limitations, these residual AEF assets do not provide a credible offensive response to crises. Until these shortfalls can be corrected, two “on-call”, rapid response AEWs, will provide rapid force projection capability. These composite AEWs contain counter air, SEAD, precision munitions, stealth, and conventional bomber forces. They will rotate on-call status, 90 days on and 90 days off but will not normally deploy unless a crisis occurs.

### **Preparation Period Spin-Up**

Roughly two months prior to deployment eligibility AEFs enter a preparation period. During this period units are notified of where and when they will deploy. Final deployment and force beddown planning is accomplished. Units receive AOR orientation, theater intelligence and threat briefings, and Rules of Engagement training. Personal mobility requirements are updated. Finally, prior to deploying or going “on-call” units are certified ready.

In this way, AEFs provide for better presentation of tailored force packages to CINCs for scheduled deployments and small contingencies.

### **Recovery**

After each deployment eligibility period, units that deployed will receive up to two weeks of recovery time. The time period is based on time deployed and determined by existing policy.

### **Normal Training and Exercises**

The AEF cycle provides roughly ten months of “normal” duty. Units reconstitute equipment and training backlogs. People get quality time with families and leaves can be scheduled. Skills and upgrade training and exercises are to be accomplished. Professional military education, enlisted promotion testing and continuing education can occur with minimal interruption. Units would conduct the day-to-day business of gaining and maintain proficiency and combat readiness.

AEF members will know when they are “in the window” for deployment, when they will be in spin-up for deployment, and when they will be in normal status. They can plan their lives accordingly. The 15-month schedule, Total Force integration and the force management rules should provide TEMPO predictability, stability and leveling to AEF members.

Two AEFs and an on-call AEW are sized such that they could have handled all deployments and pop-up crises between DESERT STORM and Operation NORTHERN ANVIL. This minimizes the risk that USAF combat forces will have to surge for a small crisis.

As already discussed, each EAF will deploy some forces forward with the remainder on-call to respond to any pop-up contingencies. The on-call, composite AEW provides the power projection punch if required.

These forces will be presented to theater commanders as Aerospace Expeditionary Task Forces (AETFs). When deployed, the AETFs are assigned to joint chain of command structures established by the gaining CINC. While on-call, in normal training, or in recovery, AEF aligned units remain in their assigned chains of command. Since AEFs have no commanders and are cross-MAJCOM, some form of centralized control was needed.

The AEF Center (AEFC) is cross-functional, centralized management team. It is designed to facilitate AEF/AEW management tasks to include: AEF/AEW tasking; providing AEF/AEW continuity; identifying AEF training requirements; developing training and planning templates; guiding all aspects of AEF/AEW planning; and monitoring AEF/AEW readiness.

The AEFC consists of two teams (blue and silver) that provide AEFs expert advice on planning and preparation to include operations, mobility, training, C2, and combat support. Team composition includes theater and functional experts from the active duty, guard and reserves. Each team guides a pair of AEFs through their spin-up and certification before entering the deployment/on-call eligibility period. The AEFC then monitors the deployments, captures lessons learned, and oversees subsequent tasking of the on-call units.

The AEFC, located at Langley, maintains coordinating authority across all MAJCOMs, USAF components, and AEF/AEW scheduled units to facilitate readiness and accomplish required planning activities. It is a facilitating staff designed to leverage the advantages of a central focal point for AEFs/AEWs. The AEFC has no chain of command authority with AEF units.

Engagement and presence missions have significant implications for deliberate and crisis action planning. As we transition back and forth across the spectrum of operations we find three different processes; each with its own systems and data bases. Unit type codes (UTCs) developed for OPLANs are not adaptable to small-scale deployments, leading to extensive use of individual augmentees to fill requirements. Unfortunately, the separate systems are not connected. During Kosovo this has resulted in double tasking of some personnel and general lack of visibility into the true status of the force.

## **Implications of Engagement and Presence**

Finally, there is no formal system for reconstitution planning. A major task for EAF/AEF implementation is to develop a common UTC-based Database and a common planning system that stretches across the spectrum.



## **Main AEF Points:**

- AEFs are force management tools.
- AEFs are pre-designated combat, mobility, support and leadership capabilities from which the Joint Force Commander can tailor the desired operational effect.
- AEF elements fulfill a 90-day “on call” period every 15-months. AEF-affiliated members will know when they are “in the window” for deployment, when they are training and when to prepare for the “on call” rotation so they can plan their lives accordingly.
- AEFs are not deployable units, and do not have a command authority. Aerospace Expeditionary Wings (AEWs), Groups (AEGs) or Squadrons (AESs) are deployable units tailored from the capabilities in an AEF pair. These units deploy with tactical-level command and control.
- When deployed, AEWs, AEGs, or AES’ align to joint command structures, normally as an Aerospace Expeditionary Task Force (ASETF), under the command of the COMAFFOR.
- Total Force integration of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve people and their frontline combat and support aircraft allow better force and personnel tempo management.

## **Why is it important?**

EAF and the AEFs address the high demands the strategy of Global Engagement places on USAF forces. These demands include maintaining high deployment tempos and multiple sustained forward operating locations while retaining rapid crisis response capability and the ability to conduct two near-simultaneous Major Theater Wars (MTWs). These demands are stressing our people and our assets. The symptoms include lower retention rates, decreasing readiness rates, increasing cannibalization rates and lower mission-ready rates.

## **Conclusion**

We need to stop managing the nation’s aerospace force as if deployments are extraordinary events warranting disruption of sustaining functions. In “normal” expeditionary operations, adherence to the AEF schedule and its rule sets is an essential part of EAF mission accomplishment...the mission of sustaining and retaining the force while still meeting Joint Force tasks.



## **FIRST LIEUTENANT EDWARD RICKENBACKER**

was a pilot of the 94<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron. While on patrol in his SPAD over the lines near Billy, France, 25 September 1918, he attacked five Fokkers, which were protecting two Halberstadts. He dived on them and shot down one of the Fokkers then attacked on the Halberstadts shooting it down also. In his dedication to United States victory in the air, Lieutenant Rickenbacker totally disregarded the odds of seven to one against him.